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ABSTRACT

This report on 1978-1979 desegregation activity in Seattle, Washington, charts demographic changes in school district enrollment and reductions in racial imbalance. Data are also presented on the number of students reassigned to residence based schools, retention rates for reassigned students by grade and race, and number of students participating in optional transfer programs. The report concludes that: (1) student enrollment declined somewhat, primarily among majority students; (2) the number of racially imbalanced schools was reduced; (3) nearly 4,000 students attended residence based schools, aiding in reductions of racial imbalance; (4) retention rates associated with student reassignment declined one percent for minority students and two percent for majority students; and (5) the availability of optional transfers appeared to reduce the impact of student reassignment on retention rates. (APM)

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DESEGREGATION EVALUATION PROGRESS REPORT: CHANGING ENROLLMENT PATTERNS UNDER THE SEATTLE PLAN

REPORT NO. 79-8
APRIL 1979

HUGH WALKUP

Office of
Instructional Program Evaluation

Department of
Planning, Research & Evaluation

SEATTLE
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

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MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SUMMARY

In 1978-79, the first year of implementing "The Seattle Plan for Eliminating Racial Imbalance":

- Approximately 4,000 students were attending new feeder pattern schools.
- Over 5,000 students were attending schools as voluntary racial transfers or as transfers to educational program options.
- Approximately equal numbers of majority and minority students were involved in both mandatory and voluntary reassignments.
- The number of racially imbalanced public schools in Seattle was reduced from 27 in 1977-78 to 15 in 1978-79, despite a continued decline in majority (White) student enrollment. Furthermore, the proportion of minority students in all racially imbalanced schools declined from 73 percent in June 1978 to 66 percent in November 1978.
- The number of students enrolled in racially imbalanced schools declined by 39 percent between June and November 1978.
- For the first time in recent history most minority students in the District were attending schools in which over half of the students were majority. This has seldom been accomplished in urban school districts during the first year of a major desegregation plan.
- In contrast to "White flight" reports of three to fifteen percentage points in other urban districts in the first year of a major desegregation plan, Seattle's enrollment decline associated with reassignment of students for desegregation was one percentage point for minority students and two percentage points for majority students.
- One of the probable reasons that more students did not leave the District was the availability of voluntary educational program option transfers to other locations where students could contribute to reductions in racial imbalance.
- Voluntary transfers had a net beneficial impact on the reduction of racial imbalance.

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INTRODUCTION

The first year implementation of the "Seattle Plan for Eliminating Racial Imbalance"*, included the pairing and triading of 36 elementary schools, changes in secondary school feeder patterns for entering grade levels, and voluntary student transfers. These strategies were adopted by the Seattle School Board to eliminate racial imbalance in Seattle Public Schools by the 1979-80 school year.

This second evaluation progress report on 1978-79 desegregation activity is presented in a question-discussion format. It is divided into five sections: demographic changes in District enrollment, reductions in racial imbalance, student reassignment, retention rates, and optional student transfer programs. Each section is divided into several questions which are addressed in the text and in the statistical table at the end of each section.

The purpose of this report is to document and disseminate a summary of desegregation evaluation information available to date as specified in the "Desegregation Evaluation Plan for 1978-79" (April 1978, SPS Document Number 78-3). The information provided here, and available in considerably more detail in the Evaluation Office**, has been generated during the formulation of 1979-80 desegregation plans. Consequently, most of this information has been previously used in planning, projections, and briefings for District administration, citizen advisory groups, and the School Board.

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*Racial imbalance was defined by the Seattle School Board in Resolution 1977-8 as

> The situation that exists when the combined minority student enrollment in a school exceeds the Districtwide combined minority average by 20 percentage points, provided that the single minority enrollment (as defined by current federal categories) of no school will exceed 50 percent of the student body.

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DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN DISTRICT ENROLLMENT

Question 1. What changes took place in the total student enrollment of the Seattle School District in 1978-79?

Student enrollment continued to decline in 1978-79 in approximately the same pattern as in previous years. This pattern goes back to 1962, when 99,326 students were enrolled in Seattle schools. As of December 15, 1978, the total enrollment was 53,885, an overall decline of 46% during this 16 year period. Total student enrollment has declined by an average of 7 percent per year for the past four years. In 1978-79 it declined by 8 percent from 1977-78.

Question 2. What changes took place in the ethnic composition of Seattle School District in 1978-79?

The pattern that emerges is a continuing decline in the White student population and a relatively stable population of students from other ethnic groups. This has resulted in a continuing increase in the percentage of District students who are from minority ethnic groups.

The rate of decline in White student enrollment changed slightly over the past four years. White student enrollment declined by an average of 10 percent per year since 1975-76, 11 percent between 1975-76 and 1976-77, by 9 percent between 1976-77 and 1977-78, and by 12 percent between 1977-78 and 1978-79.

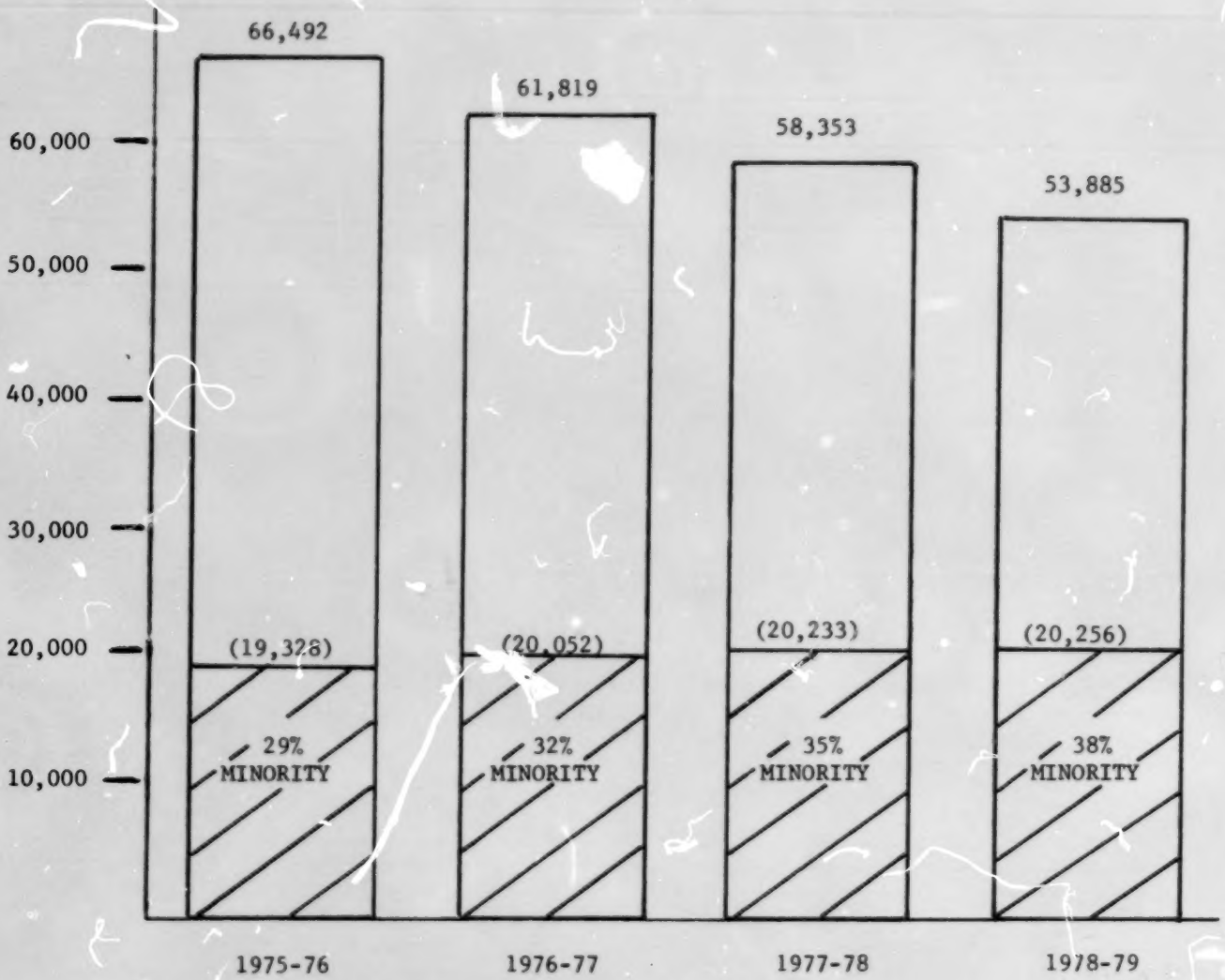
The rate of change in the minority student population also changed during this period. Minority student enrollment increased by 4 percent between 1975-76 and 1976-77, increased by 1 percent between 1976-77 and 1977-78, and remained stable (+0.1%) between 1977-78 and 1978-79.

The proportion of District students from minority ethnic groups has risen by 3 percentage points per year since the 1975-76 school year, from 29 percent in 1975-76 to 38 percent in 1978-79.

Table A, below, summarizes District enrollments and minority proportions since 1975-76.

TABLE A

TOTAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND PERCENT MINORITY SINCE 1975-76



REDUCTIONS IN RACIAL IMBALANCE

Question 1. To what extent did the Seattle Plan reduce the number of racially imbalanced schools?

The number of racially imbalanced schools declined from 27 in June 1978 to 15 in November 1978. The decline in racially imbalanced schools was most pronounced at the elementary level, where new feeder patterns were fully implemented. The number of racially imbalanced elementary schools declined from 20 in June 1978 to 9 in November 1978.

At the secondary level, where new feeder patterns were implemented only at the entering grade, the number of racially imbalanced schools declined from seven to six. However, entering grade levels remained racially imbalanced in only one of the six racially imbalanced secondary schools. The entering grade at this school (Washington) was less than two percentage points above the racial imbalance definition. At South Shore Middle School and Sealth High School, which were not among the racially imbalanced schools, the entering grades were also slightly above the racial imbalance cutoff.

In addition to reductions in the number of racially imbalanced schools, there were reductions in the minority student percentage in those schools which remained racially imbalanced. In June 1978 the combined population of racially imbalanced schools was 73 percent minority; in November 1978 it was 66 percent minority.

Question 2. To what extent did the Seattle Plan reduce the number of students attending racially imbalance schools?

The number of students attending racially imbalanced schools in Seattle declined by 39 percent, from 13,939 in June 1978 to 8,556 in November 1978. Again, the decline was considerably more dramatic at the elementary level: from 7,628 in June to 3,086 in November 1978, a decline of 60 percent.

Question 3. How does the reduction in racial imbalance achieved in the first year implementation of the Seattle Plan compare with reductions achieved in the first year of major desegregation efforts in other cities?

A common way of examining reductions in the number of racially imbalanced schools and the number of students attending racially imbalanced schools is the Desegre-

gation Exposure Index formulated by James Coleman (1975).* This Index was formulated to assess the impact of desegregation in a nation-wide survey. It is a measure of the extent to which minority students have school contact with White students.

Seattle's Desegregation Exposure Index improved over the past three years, particularly following implementation of the Seattle Plan in 1978-79. The Index climbed above .50 for the first time in 1978-79. This means that most minority students attend a school in which more than half the students are White.

In other urban school districts Desegregation Exposure Indices have generally been 10 to 20 points below Seattle's in the year preceding implementation of a major desegregation plan. The increase in the Desegregation Exposure Index in these other districts was somewhat greater than Seattle's during the first year of implementation. However, most of these districts did not attain as high a level on the Desegregation Exposure Index as did Seattle during first year implementation.

Table B, below, charts changes in Seattle's Desegregation Exposure Index over the past three years.

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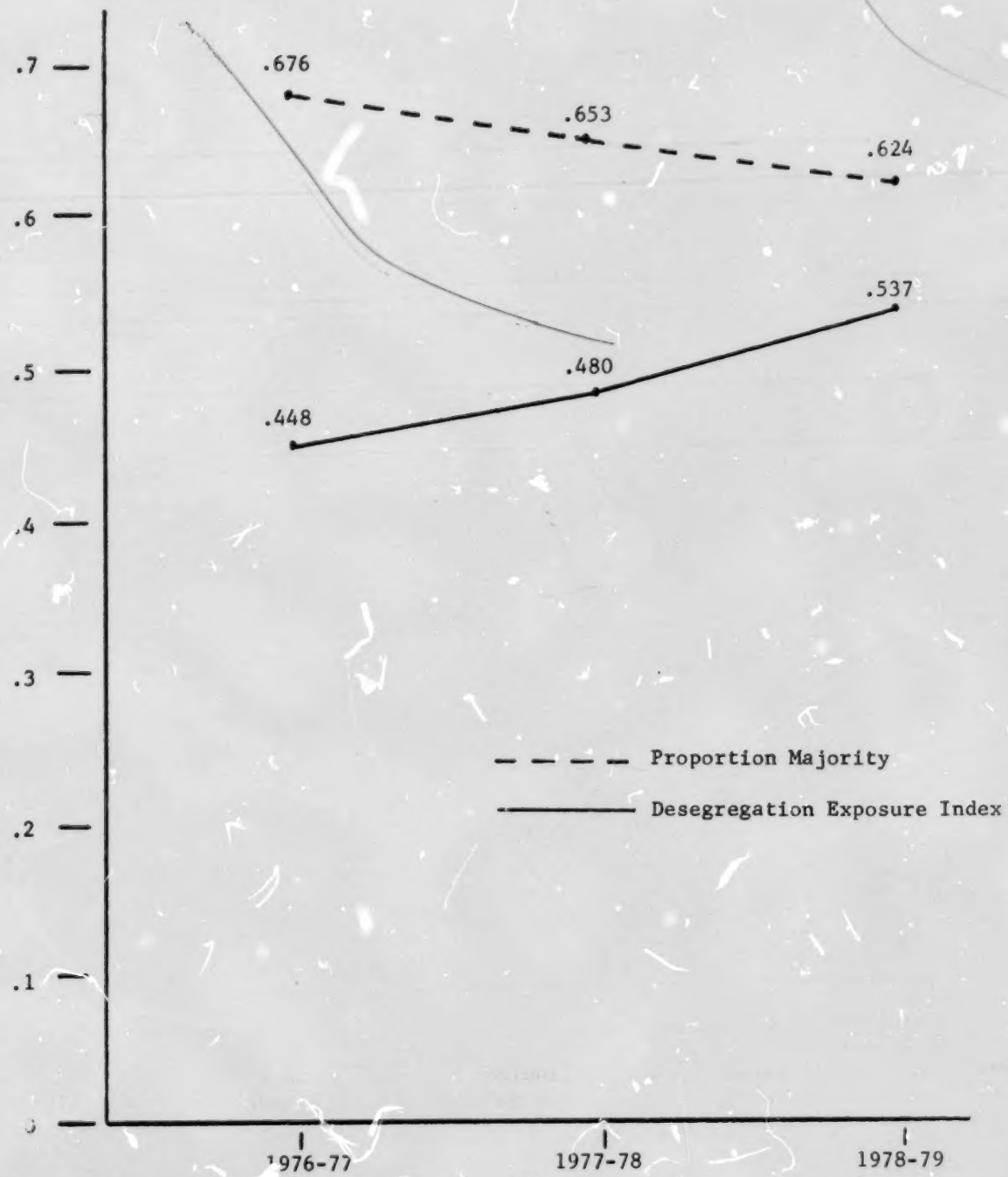
*James S. Coleman, Sara D. Kelly, and John A. Moore, Trends in School Segregation, 1968-73, (Washington, D.C., The Urban Institute, August 1975) defines the Desegregation Exposure Index as the sum of the products of the number of Black students in each school multiplied by the proportion of White students in that school, divided (after summation) by the total Black enrollment in the district. Since Seattle has a diverse ethnic population, the discussion and graph refer to a modified Index which includes all minority students, rather than only Black students. The modified (minority) Index differed by no more than .064 from Coleman's (Black) Index in Seattle, a non-significant difference. The trends are roughly parallel and both indices surpass .50 in 1978-79. Consequently, in the discussion and graph the modified Index is used interchangeably with Coleman's Desegregation Exposure Index.

TABLE B

DESEGREGATION EXPOSURE INDEX FOR ALL MINORITY STUDENTS
COMPARED WITH PROPORTION MAJORITY SINCE 1976-77



STUDENT REASSIGNMENT

Question 1. How many students enrolled in June 1978 received new residence-based school assignments as a result of 1978-79 Seattle Plan feeder patterns?

There were 6,807 students enrolled on June 1, 1978 who were initially reassigned* to new residence-based school feeder patterns in fall 1978. Half (51%) of these students were from minority ethnic groups. Approximately three-fourth (72%) were elementary students assigned to a new school within a pair or traid.

The 6,807 reassigned students represented 12 percent of the District's enrollment on June 1, 1978. This proportion is considerably smaller than the 22 percent of District students already attending other than their residence-based schools on that date as voluntary, special education, bilingual, or hardship transfers.

Question 2. How many students enrolled in November 1978 were attending new residence-based school assignments as a result of the Seattle Plan?

On November 1, 1978 there were 3,982 (53% minority) students attending new residence-based school assignments. There are two reasons that this number is considerably below the number of students who received new assignments in June 1978. First, the total District enrollment declined between June and November, particularly among elementary students. Secondly, some of the reassigned students were eligible to continue in or transfer to other schools for special education, bilingual, or educational option programs.

The total District population, excluding kindergarten, declined by 1,352 (3%) between June and November 1978. The population of students whose grade level and residence area made them eligible for reassignment under the Seattle Plan declined by 9 percent, from 6,807 on June 1, 1978, to 6,173 on November 1, 1978.

Approximately one-third (35%) of these students continued or received transfers to programs in other schools. Most of the schools to which they tranferred were also involved in the desegregation program. The net effect of student transfer activity on desegregation will be discussed in a later section.

Table C, below, summarizes in more detail the movement of reassigned students.

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*Initially reassigned students include all students whose residence area and 1978-79 grade level were affected by revised feeder patterns under the Seattle Plan.

TABLE C

MOVEMENT OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR NEW RESIDENCE-BASED ASSIGNMENTS
JUNE 1, 1978 TO NOVEMBER 1, 1978

	Majority	Minority	Total
Enrolled 6/1/78	3,329 (100%)	3,478 (100%)	6,807 (100%)
Left District	800 (24%)	406 (12%)	1,206 (18%)
Entered District	265 (8%)	307 (9%)	562 (8%)
Enrolled 11/1/78	2,794 (84%)	3,379 (97%)	6,173 (91%)
Transfers	922 (28%)	1,269 (36%)	2,191 (32%)
Educational Options	396 (12%)	403 (12%)	799 (12%)
Special Education	113 (3%)	139 (4%)	252 (4%)
Bilingual	3 (0%)	146 (4%)	149 (2%)
Hardship	175 (5%)	147 (4%)	322 (5%)
Grandfathered*	183 (5%)	296 (9%)	479 (7%)
VRT	51 (2%)	137 (4%)	188 (3%)
Attending--Residence-Based Assignment 11/1/78	1,872 (56%)	2,110 (61%)	3,982 (58%)

*Students who were permitted to continue in their previous feeder pattern in 1978-79 under special provisions of the Seattle Plan.

RETENTION RATES

Question 1. To what extent were the retention rates for students who received new school assignments different from retention rates for other students?

Retention rates were computed by comparing student fall 1978 assignments as of the end of the 1977-78 school year with student enrollment as of the beginning of the 1978-79 school year. Thus, a retention rate of 90 percent means that there were 10 percent fewer students in November 1978 than in June 1978, and a retention rate of 105 percent means that there were 5 percent more in November 1978 than in June 1978.

The Districtwide retention rate for grades 1 through 12 was 97 percent between June and November 1978. The retention rate for students receiving new school assignments under the Seattle Plan was 91 percent. The retention rate for students whose school assignments were not affected by the Seattle Plan in 1978-79 was 98 percent.

Question 2. To what extent did retention rates differ among grade levels?

Retention rates were higher at the secondary level (101%) than at the elementary level (94%). The higher secondary rate was largely due to a higher senior high school rate (103%) and a moderate junior high/middle school rate (98%). The high school rate was inflated three percentage points by the re-enrollment of students who were suspended, exempted, or expelled as of June 1978. This indicates that Seattle's enrollment decline occurred primarily at the elementary level and to a lesser extent at the junior high/middle school level. The apparent increase at the high school level was an artifact of suspension, exemption, and expulsion policies.

Question 3. To what extent did retention rates differ between majority and minority students?

Districtwide, the minority student retention rate was 100 percent, meaning that there were approximately the same number of minority students enrolled in November as had fall assignments in June 1978. The Districtwide majority student retention rate was 96 percent.

The same difference between minority and majority retention rates appears in rates for students whose school assignments for fall 1978 were not changed by the Seattle Plan (minority: 101%; majority: 97%). However, the rate for students who were affected by new fall 1978 school assignments was considerably lower for majority students (84%) than for minority students (97%). These differences were consistent across grade levels.

At the elementary level there was no difference between the retention rates for minority students who were not reassigned whether their school became paired/triaded or not. The rate was 98 percent in both cases. However, the rate for elementary majority students with unchanged school assignments was 91 percent in pairs and triads and 94 percent in unaffected elementary schools.

Question 4. To what extent did implementation of the Seattle Plan affect Districtwide retention rates?

Desegregation attributable "White flight" rates of 3 to 15 percent have been reported for other urban school districts in the first year of implementation of a major desegregation plan. Seattle's rate appears to have been considerably lower, and was also accompanied by reductions in minority, as well as majority, retention rates.

The impact of desegregation on Seattle's retention rate, considering both reassigned students and students assigned to paired or triaded elementary schools, appears to have been to lower the retention rate by two percentage points for majority students and by one percentage point for minority students.* This effect was most pronounced at the elementary level, where the Seattle Plan was fully implemented.

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*These conclusions are consistently supported by the application of several methodologies.

First, in the absence of any effects of the Seattle Plan on retention rates, the expected Districtwide retention rate would be the same as the rate for students who were not directly affected by the plan. For example, since the Districtwide retention rate (97%) was one percentage point lower than the rate for students not affected (98%), it can be inferred that this one percent lower Districtwide retention rate is associated with implementation of the Seattle Plan. This inference is supported by more precise comparisons of affected and unaffected students and by comparisons of projected with actual enrollment.

The apparent impact of implementation of the Seattle Plan on District retention rates was more precisely calculated by the following method: Calculate the projected enrollment of students who received new school assignments or whose schools were paired or triaded, using retention rates for unaffected students differentially by ethnic group and grade level. Subtract from this number the number of students actually enrolled in November 1978 who had received new school assignments or whose schools were paired or triaded. Divide this number by the Districtwide enrollment in June 1978. These calculations were performed separately for majority students, minority students, each school grade level, transfer status, sex, and affected school. The results of these computations also agree with the results of computations based on projections from retention rates in the two years preceding implementation, a method used by most researchers analyzing majority student attrition during desegregation.

Most researchers have concluded that there has been no desegregation related "White flight" after the first year implementation of a major desegregation plan. Several have concluded that after five years of desegregation the total number of and proportion of White students are actually higher than they would have been in the absence of desegregation.

Table D, below, summarizes retention rates of majority and minority students for each school level and residence-based assignment status.

TABLE D

ASSIGNMENTS FOR FALL 1978 AS OF JUNE 1, 1978 AND RETENTION RATES FROM JUNE 1, 1978 TO NOVEMBER 1, 1978 BY SCHOOL LEVEL, ETHNIC GROUP, AND ASSIGNMENT ELIGIBILITY STATUS

	Elementary Schools*		Junior High/ Middle Schools	Senior High Schools	All Schools Total
	Pair or Triad	Non-Pair or Triad			
Majority Students					
New Residence-based Assignments	2,328 (83%)	0	526 (86%)	475 (87%)	3,329 (84%)
Unchanged Assignments	3,012 (91%)	9,481 (94%)	7,469 (97%)	9,914 (102%)	29,876 (97%)
All Majority Students	5,340 (87%)	9,481 (94%)	7,995 (96%)	10,389 (99%)	33,205 (96%)
Minority Students					
New Residence-based Assignments	2,578 (96%)	0	511 (96%)	389 (107%)	3,478 (97%)
Unchanged Assignments	2,470 (98%)	3,575 (98%)	4,153 (102%)	4,950 (106%)	15,148 (101%)
All Minority Students	5,048 (97%)	3,575 (98%)	4,664 (102%)	5,339 (106%)	18,626 (101%)
All Students					
New Residence-based Assignment	4,906 (90%)	0	1,037 (91%)	864 (96%)	6,807 (91%)
Unchanged Assignments	5,482 (94%)	13,056 (95%)	11,622 (99%)	14,864 (103%)	45,024 (98%)
All Students	10,388 (92%)	13,056 (95%)	12,659 (98%)	15,728 (103%)	51,831 (97%)

*Excluding kindergarten

OPTIONAL STUDENT TRANSFER PROGRAMS

Question 1. How many students transferred to other District schools for educational program options or voluntary racial transfers in 1978-79?

There were 5,340 students attending District schools other than their assigned school as a result of transfers to educational program options or voluntary racial transfers. Approximately three-fourths of these students were continuing transfers to Magnet programs or Voluntary Racial Transfer programs from previous years. Half of these students were majority and half minority.

These students account for approximately one-half of the 10,711 students attending other than their assigned school. The other half is accounted for by special education, bilingual, and hardship transfer students.

An additional 99 students from outside Seattle School District transferred in to educational program options in Seattle schools.

Question 2. What was the impact on desegregation of student transfers for educational program options or voluntary racial transfers?

Under the Seattle Plan voluntary and educational option transfers were not designed as a primary desegregation strategy. However, the net effect of these transfers has been a significant contribution to reductions in racial imbalance.

Of the 5,340 optional student transfers, 1,933 (36%) reduced racial imbalance* at both the sending (assigned) and receiving (attending) school; 684 (13%) worsened racial imbalance* at both the sending and receiving school. Consequently, the net effect of optional transfer programs was the movement of 1,249 students who helped improve racial balance. This same effect was observed at all grade levels, including paired and triaded elementary schools.

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*Reducing racial imbalance was defined as transfers which reduced the number of minority students or increased the number of majority students in one of the schools which would have been racially imbalanced in the absence of any desegregation intervention. Worsening racial imbalance was defined as transfers which increased the number of minority students or reduced the number of majority students in one of those schools. Students whose transfers both improved and worsened or had no effect on racial imbalance were defined as "neutral" with respect to racial balance.

Retention rates for students who as of June 1, 1978, had received authorization to continue previous transfers or begin newly requested transfers were one percentage point higher than for students continuing in their previous residence-based school assignment. This higher retention rate was similar for both majority and minority students at each grade level.

Table E, below, summarizes the net effect of this student transfer activity by school level and residence-based school assignment status.

TABLE E

NET EFFECT ON RACIAL IMBALANCE OF VOLUNTARY RACIAL TRANSFERS AND TRANSFERS FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OPTIONS BY RESIDENCE-BASED SCHOOL LEVEL (NOVEMBER 1, 1978)

Net Effect On Racial Imbalance	Elementary Schools		Junior High or Middle Schools	Senior High Schools	Total
	Pair or Triad	Non-Pair or Triad			
Improved	597 (37%)	391 (29%)	399 (35%)	546 (43%)	1,933 (36%)
Neutral	719 (45%)	865 (64%)	582 (51%)	557 (44%)	2,723 (51%)
Worsened	282 (18%)	91 (7%)	155 (14%)	156 (12%)	684 (13%)
Total	1,598 (100%)	1,347 (100%)	1,136 (100%)	1,259 (100%)	5,340 (100%)
Net Improved	+ 315 (20%)	+ 300 (22%)	+ 244 (21%)	+ 390 (31%)	+1,249 (23%)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Question: What demographic changes took place in Seattle's student enrollment in 1978?

Student enrollment continued to decline, primarily among majority students. Minority student enrollment did not increase for the first time in several years.

Question: What reductions in racial imbalance were achieved in 1978-79?

The number of racially imbalanced public schools in Seattle was reduced from 27 in 1977-78 to 15 in 1978-79. For the first time in recent history most minority students in the District were attending schools in which over half of the students were White (majority). These improvements compare favorably with those achieved by other urban school districts during the first year implementation of a major desegregation plan.

Question: How many students were attending new residence-based school assignments as a result of the Seattle Plan?

On November 1, 1978, there were 3,982 students attending new residence-based school assignments as a result of the Seattle Plan. Approximately half (53%) of these students were minority; half (47%) majority. These students made a significant contribution to reductions in racial imbalance achieved in 1978-79.

Question: Were student retention rates affected by new residence-based school assignments?

In other urban districts "White flight" declines of 3 to 15 percent in the first year implementation of a major desegregation plan have been reported. The portion of the decline in Seattle's student retention rate associated with student reassignment was one percent for minority students and two percent for majority students.

Question: What contributions did optional student transfer programs make to reductions in racial imbalance?

The availability of voluntary and educational program option transfers appears to have reduced the impact of student reassignment on retention rates. In addition to their positive impact on retention rates, voluntary transfers had a net beneficial impact on the reduction of racial imbalance. Minority and majority students participated in optional student transfer programs in approximately equal numbers.